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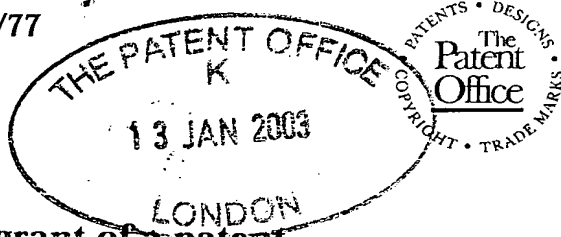
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1/77
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Request for grant of a patent

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The Patent Office

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1. Your reference	P016054GB			13 JAN 2003
2. Patent application number (The Patent Office will fill in this part)	0300713.5			
3. Full name, address and postcode of the or of each applicant (underline all surnames)	ARM Limited 110 Fulbourn Road Cherry Hinton Cambridge CB1 9NJ			
Patents ADP number (if you know it)				
If the applicant is a corporate body, give the country/state of its incorporation	United Kingdom			
4. Title of the invention	Data Processing Performance Control			
5. Name of your agent (if you have one)	D Young & Co			
"Address for service" in the United Kingdom to which all correspondence should be sent (including the postcode)	21 New Fetter Lane London EC4A 1DA			
Patents ADP number (if you know it)	59006			
6. If you are declaring priority from one or more earlier patent applications, give the country and the date of filing of the or of each of these earlier applications and (if you know it) the or each application number	Country	Priority application number (if you know it)	Date of filing (day / month / year)	
7. If this application is divided or otherwise derived from an earlier UK application, give the number and the filing date of the earlier application	Number of earlier application		Date of filing (day / month / year)	
8. Is a statement of inventorship and of right to grant of a patent required in support of this request? (Answer 'Yes' if: a) any applicant named in part 3 is not an inventor, or b) there is an inventor who is not named as an applicant, or c) any named applicant is a corporate body. See note (d))	Yes			

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Description 10

Claim(s) 4

Abstract 1

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Statement of inventorship and right to grant of a patent (Patents Form 7/77) 2

Request for preliminary examination and search (Patents Form 9/77) 1

Request for substantive examination (Patents Form 10/77) 0

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11. I/We request the grant of a patent on the basis of this application.

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Date 13 January 2003

D Young & Co (Agents for the Applicants)

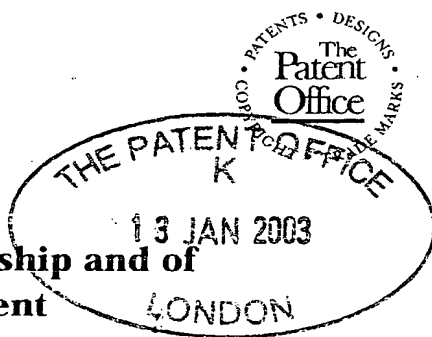
12. Name and daytime telephone number of person to contact in the United Kingdom Nigel Robinson 023 8071 9500

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**Statement of inventorship and of
right to grant of a patent**

The Patent Office

Cardiff Road
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South Wales
NP10 8QQ

1. Your reference

P016054GB

13 JAN 2003

2. Patent application number
(if you know it)

0300713.5

3. Full name of the or of each applicant

ARM Limited

4. Title of the invention

Data Processing Performance Control

5. State how the applicant(s) derived the right
from the inventor(s) to be granted a patent

By Virtue of Employment

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which the above patent application relates to.

Signature

DY Co

Date 13 January 2003

D Young & Co (Agents for the Applicants)

8. Name and daytime telephone number of
person to contact in the United Kingdom

Nigel Robinson

023 8071 9500

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6635064001

Patents ADP number (if you know it):

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DATA PROCESSING PERFORMANCE CONTROL

This invention relates to the field of data processing systems. More particularly, this invention relates to the field of the control of data processing performance, such as, for example, so as to reduce the energy consumed by a data processing system.

An important consideration in data processing systems is their energy consumption. Data processing systems which consume less energy allow longer battery life in mobile devices, tend to run cooler and more reliably, and require fewer special engineering considerations to deal with heat dissipation and the like. It is strongly desirable to reduce the energy consumption of data processing systems.

Balanced against a desire to reduce the energy consumption of data processing systems is a simultaneous desire to increase their performance level to deal with increasingly computationally intensive tasks. Such tasks often require highly intensive processing operations for short periods of time followed by relatively long idle times in which little computation is required.

In order to address the above two factors, it is known to produce data processing systems that are able to change their performance level so that high computational performance is provided in some configurations and low energy consumptions in other configurations. Known systems, such as the LongRun software produced by Transmeta, or the SpeedStep systems produced by Intel, allow a processor to be switched between such different configurations. In order to match the desired performance goals, a high computational performance configuration would be one with a relatively high operating voltage and a relatively high processor clock frequency. Conversely, a low energy consumption configuration has a relatively low operating voltage and a relatively low processor clock frequency.

As well as providing the performance and energy management capabilities described above, another important design characteristic is that hardware and software designs should be re-useable in a relatively large number of different circumstances. If computer software, such as operating system software, has to be re-written for

different hardware implementations, or the hardware designs significantly modified for different hardware implementations, then this is strongly disadvantageous.

According to one aspect the invention provides apparatus for processing data,
5 said apparatus comprising:

a processor operable to perform data processing operations, said processor being operable to generate a performance control signal indicative of a desired data processing performance level of said processor; and

one or more further circuits responsive to said performance control signal to
10 operate so as to support said desired data processing performance level of said processor; wherein

at least while responding to a change in said performance control signal, said one or more further circuits are operable to generate a current operation signal indicative of current operation of said one or more further circuits.

15

The present technique provides a current operation signal, at least whilst responding to a change, in a manner that allows improved performance monitoring and performance control. As examples, intermediate levels of performance can be adopted in dependence upon the current operation signals generated, or the
20 performance measured in terms of computational cycles executed, or the energy consumed determined by performance monitors.

Preferred examples of current operation signals include a signal from a voltage controller indicating the current maximum voltage of operation that may be supported
25 and a signal from a clock generator indicating the current clock frequency being generated.

The current operation signal is particularly useful in the context of a clock generator that can have one or more permanently available clock frequencies and one
30 or more selectively available clock frequencies, as in such a situation the particular clock frequency generated at a given time and during a given change can vary depending upon a wide variety of factors, thus making the information from the current operation signal specifying the actual operating frequency highly useful.

The current operation signals may also be highly advantageously combined to support intermediate levels of operation during a performance slew such as allowing changes in operational clock frequency of the processor to occur when the voltage controller reaches an output sufficient to sustain that clock frequency provided that
5 that clock frequency is available at that time.

Whilst not restricted in its utility to enabling intermediate performance levels of operation, the current operation signals are strongly advantageous in embodiments which do provide such facilities.

10 Viewed from another aspect the present invention provides a method of processing data, said method comprising the steps of:

performing data processing operations with a processor, said processor being operable to generate a performance control signal indicative of a desired data
15 processing performance level of said processor; and

in response to said performance control signal, operating one or more further circuits so as to support said desired data processing performance level of said processor; wherein

at least while responding to a change in said performance control signal, said
20 one or more further circuits are operable to generate a current operation signal indicative of current operation of said one or more further circuit.

Embodiments of the invention will now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

25 Figure 1 schematically illustrates a portion of a data processing system including a performance controller, a clock generator and a voltage controller;

Figure 2 is a flow diagram schematically illustrating the operation of an
30 operating system computer program in setting a desired performance level;

Figure 3 schematically illustrates an example mapping between desired performance level and control signal value;

Figure 4 is a flow diagram schematically illustrating the control of a voltage controller;

Figure 5 is a flow diagram schematically illustrating the control of a clock generator;

Figure 6 is a diagram schematically illustrating another example of a data processing system utilising the current techniques; and

Figure 7 is a diagram schematically illustrating a further example of a mapping between a desired performance level and a control signal value.

Figure 1 illustrates a portion of a data processing system including a performance controller 2, a clock generator 4 and a voltage controller 6. The circuits in Figure 1 typically form part of a larger integrated circuit which includes a processor, such as an ARM processor produced by ARM Limited of Cambridge, England, as well as other circuit elements, possibly as part of a system-on-chip design. The circuit elements other than the performance controller 2, the clock generator 4 and the voltage controller 6 are omitted from Figure 1 for the sake of simplicity. The performance controller 2 receives a performance level request signal/value which is generated under program instruction control by a computer program, such as an operating computer program, executing upon the processor (not illustrated). This desired data processing performance level request may be written to a dedicated memory location within the memory address space for such a purpose, may be written to a control register, such as a control register within a configuration coprocessor, e.g. CP15 ARM architecture or stored in some other way. The performance controller 2 also incorporates a performance monitor, which may be one or more performance counters counting the passage of real time, clock signals, work performed or other performance monitoring parameters. When the performance controller 2 receives a data processing performance level request indicative of a change in the desired performance level, then it is used issue a request for the new target clock speed to the clock generator 4 and a request for a new target voltage to the voltage controller 6. It will be appreciated that once the program instruction has written its desired data processing performance level to the appropriate location it

hands control of how that is put into effect to the hardware (performance controller 2). The performance controller 2 maps the desired data processing performance request to appropriate control signal values for the clock generator 4 and voltage controller 6 (the performance controller 2 includes a mapping circuit). The data processing performance request signal may be a Gray coded signal value or a simple linearly coded value. The mapping can be to a thermometer coded control signal value as this provides good resistance against sampling errors when sampling between clock domains which may be asynchronous. Furthermore, this provides a type of fail-safe behaviour whereby sampling errors tend to produce the lowest stable synchronised value for use.

The control signal passed to the voltage controller 6 instructs the voltage controller 6 to adopt a new voltage output level. The voltage output levels that are supported may be configured by programming configuration parameter registers 8 within the voltage controller 6 at bootup or some other time. The voltage controller 6 takes a finite amount of time to ramp up or down to the new voltage level. As it is changing to its new voltage level, the voltage controller 6 may pass through one or more intermediate levels which it would be capable of supporting an intermediate performance level pending reaching the final performance level. The voltage controller 6 generates current operation signals indicative of the current voltage levels it can support and passes these back to the performance controller 2 where they may be acted upon to trigger use of associated clock frequencies as appropriate and available.

The performance controller 2 also converts the desired data processing performance level specified by program control into control signals that are passed to the clock generator 4. These control signals specify a target clock frequency. The clock generator 4 is supplied with a variety of clock signals from one or more phase lock loop circuits 10, 12. One of these phase lock loop circuits 10 is permanently enabled and serves to provide the minimum and maximum clock frequencies supportable as well as some intermediate frequencies. Another of the phase lock loop circuits 12 is selectively available and can be powered down to save energy when the intermediate clock frequencies which it generates are not required.

The clock generator 4 generates a performance controller clock signal which is supplied to a technology dependent slack detector 14 within the voltage controller 6. This arrangement can be used to provide an additional level of control within the voltage controller 6 such that the voltage it is generating can be adjusted to support the target clock frequency with a reduced overshoot, i.e. the voltage level generated is just sufficient, with a small buffer, to support the target clock frequency. This fine level of control of the voltage output can be considered to be secondary to the gross performance level changes conducted in response to changes in desired data processing performance levels specified by program instructions. When a change to an increased performance level has been indicated, the voltage controller 6 will attempt to increase the voltage it is generating and when it is providing an increased voltage this is indicated back to the performance controller 2 which in turn can then control the CPU clock generator within the clock generator 4 to output a CPU clock signal cpucclk for supply to the processor having a new clock frequency sustainable with the new voltage, which may be an intermediate clock frequency on the way to the ultimate desired clock frequency. The clock generator 4 may not be capable of generating clock signals with the granularity that can be specified in the control signal values and accordingly passes back a quantised clock signal value corresponding to the actual clock frequency it is generating. Alternatively, this quantisation taking account of the actual capabilities of the clock generator 4 can take place within the mapping performed by the performance controller from the desired data processing performance request into the control signals.

Figure 2 schematically illustrates the processing operations which may be performed by an operating system computer program executing on a processor in accordance with one example of the technique. At step 16, the relevant processing thread waits until a determination is made of a need to change performance level. This need may be indicated by changes in external parameters, such as key presses by a user, or may be internally triggered through monitoring of the operational performance of the system using performance monitoring counters such as those previously discussed. When such a desired performance level change is detected, processing proceeds to step 18 at which the software performs a write to a memory mapped location dedicated to storing the desired data processing performance request level. The action of the computer program code is to detect the requirement for a

change in performance level and to write this requirement to a memory location. No control feedback need be provided to monitor that the desired change in performance actually takes place or how it takes place. There is an abstraction between the activity of the computer program in making this write and the underlying hardware mechanisms which act upon the request. This facilitates the use of substantially unaltered computer programs in a variety of environments taking advantage of whatever performance management mechanisms may or may not be provided within those environments.

Figure 3 schematically illustrates an example mapping between a 6-bit desired data processing performance request signal (which may optionally be Gray coded) and a corresponding thermometer coded control signal value. In this case whilst there are 33 possible performance levels, there are only 9 possible control signal values. Accordingly, there is a quantisation between the desired performance levels and control signal values. This quantisation is arranged such that the control signal value corresponds to the maximum performance level within a range of performance levels which may be mapped to that control signal value. There is a monotonic increase in the desired performance signal and the performance level this is intended to specify. Thus, the desired performance level can be a binary fraction representing a percentage of the maximum performance level that may be achievable in the system. This is a convenient and flexible way to abstract the performance level request in a manner which it can be controlled by program instructions in a wide variety of different hardware environments and for a wide variety of different processing purposes.

Figure 4 schematically illustrates control of the voltage controller 6. At step 20 the voltage controller waits for receipt of a new control signal. When a new control signal is received, processing proceeds to step 22 at which a change in the voltage level supplied is initiated. This change may be an increase or a decrease. The voltage controller 6 has a finite slew rate at which it can change its output. Step 24 monitors until the next sustainable voltage level is reached during the overall change which is occurring. When such a next level is reached, then step 26 is initiated and a new current voltage output signal is generated for supply back to the performance controller 2 to indicate the new voltage level which the voltage controller 6 is capable of supporting. This may be an intermediate voltage level on the way to the eventual

target voltage level, or at the end of the slew is the final target voltage level itself. The performance controller 2 can act upon this current voltage output signal fed back to it to control the clock generator and possibly the performance monitoring circuits. Step 28 determines whether the final voltage has yet been reached. If the final voltage
5 has not yet been reached, then processing is returned to step 24 and slewing of the voltage output continues towards its eventual target.

It will be appreciated that Figure 4 assumes that the control signal does not change. In practice, the control signal may change before the final target voltage is
10 reached. It may be that the need for a temporary change in performance level as determined by the program instructions within the operating system has gone away, such as an interrupt having been serviced or a panic mode signal having been de-asserted. In such circumstances, the control illustrated in Figure 4 is interrupted and processing returned to step 20 where action based upon the newly established control
15 signal value is initiated. It will be appreciated that the control by the software is at least partially open loop in that it merely specifies which performance level it desires at a particular point in time but does not require monitoring of what performance is actually delivered or when the performance level is actually delivered.

20 As mentioned, a panic signal (priority signal or hardware override signal) may be supplied to the performance controller 2 to override any software control of the performance level and temporarily increase the performance level to a maximum level. Bypassing of the software control of performance level can facilitate more rapid and direct switching to maximum performance levels under purely hardware
25 control, such as in response to specific high priority hardware interrupt signals. More than one such "panic" signal may be provided, e.g. a "Low-Battery-Panic" signal might force performance to a known reduced level.

Figure 5 schematically illustrates the control of the clock generator 4. At step
30 the clock generator waits to receive a new control signal. When a new control signal is received, processing proceeds to step 32 at which a determination is made as to whether or not any additional phase lock loop circuit 12 needs to be powered up to service the ultimately required new clock frequency. If such additional phase lock

loop circuits 12 are required, then processing proceeds to step 34 where they are started. Alternatively, processing proceeds directly to step 36.

At step 36 the clock generator determines whether a new clock signal closer to
5 the requested performance level is available. This facilitates the adoption of
intermediate performance levels pending the availability of the eventual target
performance level. When such an intermediate clock frequency is identified, then
processing proceeds to step 38. Step 38 determines whether or not the current
operation signal value fed back from the voltage controller 6 indicates that a voltage is
10 being generated that is capable of sustaining the new clock signal value. When such a
voltage is available, then processing proceeds to step 40 at which the new clock signal
value is adopted and generated by the CPU clock generator as signal cpuclock which is
supplied to the processor core. Step 42 then outputs a new current clock value back to
the performance controller 2 where it may be acted upon by the performance
15 monitoring hardware to assess the forward progress through the code. Step 44
determines whether or not the switch to the new clock frequency has been the switch
to the final clock frequency which was specified by the program instruction generated
desired data processing performance request. If the final target clock frequency has
not been reached, then processing returns to step 36, otherwise the control terminates,
20 (effectively returns to step 30).

As for Figure 4, Figure 5 also assumes that the desired data processing
performance level specified by the program instructions does not change. If this does
change, then a new mapped control signal value will be generated which interrupts the
25 processing illustrated in Figure 5 and returns the processing to step 30 whereupon the
new control signal value is acted upon.

The adoption of intermediate clock frequency values whilst changing between
an initial and a final clock frequency value allows the best forward progress through
30 the code to be achieved for the particular state of the circuits concerned. The circuits
do not stay operating at the initial clock frequency until the eventual target clock
frequency becomes available, but instead ramp up or down through a sequence of
clock frequencies as each becomes available during the performance slew. The
adoption of a new clock frequency can be considered to be controlled by a logical

AND of a signal indicating that the frequency is closer to the target frequency than the current frequency, a signal indicating the availability of that frequency from a clock source together with a signal indicating that the voltage controller is capable of producing a power signal having a voltage sufficient to sustain operation at that new
5 clock frequency.

Figure 6 is a diagram schematically illustrating a data processing system utilising the current techniques. Like elements to those illustrated in Figure 1 are given like reference numerals. Figure 6 additionally illustrates the processor 46 which
10 executes the program instructions, which may be held within a tightly coupled memory system 48 or some other memory. The different voltage domains concerned necessitate level shifters to be provided at various interfaces in the circuit as illustrated.

15 Figure 7 illustrates another example mapping between desired data processing performance request level and thermometer coded control signal value. In this case a 32-bit thermometer coded control signal value is used yielding the possibility of a finer grained control of performance. It may be that the further circuits which respond to these 32-bit control signal values are in fact only capable of providing more
20 coarsely grained control and so will effectively internally quantise the control signal values concerned. The thermometer coded control signal values provide a particularly convenient way of combining control signal values from different sources, such as from different processors on a multiprocessor system, whereby the overall performance level, which may be controllable only on a chip-wide basis, can be
25 properly selected. A maximum control signal value can be determined by a logical OR of the control signal values, a minimum control signal value may be determined by a logical AND of the control signal value and equivalence may be determined by the XOR of the control signal values. The maximum function may be useful in determining the maximum requested clock frequency, the minimum function may be
30 useful in indicating the minimum sustainable voltage and the equivalents function may be useful in determining a match between requirements of different elements.

CLAIMS

1. Apparatus for processing data, said apparatus comprising:

5 a processor operable to perform data processing operations, said processor being operable to generate a performance control signal indicative of a desired data processing performance level of said processor; and

one or more further circuits responsive to said performance control signal to operate so as to support said desired data processing performance level of said
10 processor; wherein

at least while responding to a change in said performance control signal, said one or more further circuits are operable to generate a current operation signal indicative of current operation of said one or more further circuits.

15 2. Apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein said one or more further circuits include a voltage controller operable to generate a power signal for said processor at a plurality of different voltage levels, said current operation signal being indicative of a maximum power supply voltage of that can currently be supported by said voltage controller.

20 3. Apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein said one or more further circuits include a clock generator operable to generate a clock signal with a selectable clock frequency, said current operation signal being indicative of a clock frequency that is currently being generated by said clock generator.

25 4. Apparatus as claimed in claim 3, wherein said clock generator is operable to generate a clock signal with one or more permanently available clock signal frequencies and one or more selectively available clock signal frequencies.

30 5. Apparatus as claimed in claim 4, wherein a permanently enabled PLL circuit is operable to generate said one or more permanently available clock signal frequencies and a selectively enabled PLL circuit is operable to generate said one or more selectively available clock signal frequencies.

6. Apparatus as claimed in claim 2 and any one of claims 3, 4 and 5, wherein, in response to an increase in desired data processing performance level, said clock generator increases clock signal frequency when said voltage controller generates a current operation signal indicative of a generation of said power signal with a voltage level sufficient to support an increased clock signal frequency.

7. Apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein while responding to a change in performance control signal corresponding to a change from a first desired data processing performance level to a second desired data processing performance level, said one or more further circuits are operable to support data processing at at least one intermediate data processing performance level and said processor temporarily operates at said at least one intermediate data processing performance level during said change.

8. Apparatus as claimed in claim 7, wherein said one or more further circuits include a clock generator operable to generate a clock signal with a selectable clock frequency.

9. Apparatus as claimed in claim 8, wherein, in response to an increase in desired data processing performance level, said clock generator increases clock signal frequency to an intermediate clock signal frequency when a power signal is generated with a voltage level sufficient to support said intermediate clock signal frequency.

10. Apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 7 to 9, wherein a priority signal serves to trigger said one or more further circuits change to support a maximum data processing performance level independently of said performance control signal.

11. A method of processing data, said method comprising the steps of:
performing data processing operations with a processor, said processor being operable to generate a performance control signal indicative of a desired data processing performance level of said processor; and

in response to said performance control signal, operating one or more further circuits so as to support said desired data processing performance level of said processor; wherein

at least while responding to a change in said performance control signal, said one or more further circuits are operable to generate a current operation signal indicative of current operation of said one or more further circuit.

5 12. A method as claimed in claim 11, wherein said one or more further circuit include a voltage controller operable to generate a power signal for said processor at a plurality of different voltage levels, said current operation signal being indicative of a maximum power supply voltage of that can currently be supported by said voltage controller.

10

13. A method as claimed in claim 11, wherein said one or more further circuits include a clock generator operable to generate a clock signal with a selectable clock frequency, said current operation signal being indicative of a clock frequency that is currently being generated by said clock generator.

15

14. A method as claimed in claim 13, wherein said clock generator is operable to generate a clock signal with one or more permanently available clock signal frequencies and one or more selectively available clock signal frequencies.

20 15. A method as claimed in claim 14, wherein a permanently enabled PLL circuit is operable to generate said one or more permanently available clock signal frequencies and a selectively enabled PLL circuit is operable to generate said one or more selectively available clock signal frequencies.

25 16. A method as claimed in claim 12 and any one of claims 13, 14 and 15, wherein, in response to an increase in desired data processing performance level, said clock generator increases clock signal frequency when said voltage controller generates a current operation signal indicative of a generation of said power signal with a voltage level sufficient to support an increased clock signal frequency.

30

17. A method as claimed in claim 12, wherein while responding to a change in performance control signal corresponding to a change from a first desired data processing performance level to a second desired data processing performance level, said further circuit is operable to support data processing at at least one intermediate

data processing performance level and said processor temporarily operates at said at least one intermediate data processing performance level during said change.

18. A method as claimed in claim 17, wherein said one or more further circuits
5 include a clock generator operable to generate a clock signal with a selectable clock frequency.

19. A method as claimed in claim 18, wherein, in response to an increase in
desired data processing performance level, said clock generator increases clock signal
10 frequency to an intermediate clock signal frequency when a power signal is generated with a voltage level sufficient to support said intermediate clock signal frequency.

20. A method as claimed in any one of claims 17 to 19, wherein a priority signal
serves to trigger said further circuit change to support a maximum data processing
15 performance level independently of said performance control signal.

ABSTRACT

DATA PROCESSING PERFORMANCE CONTROL

5 A data processing system includes a processor 46 operable to generate control
signals to control one or more further circuits 4, 6 to adopt operational states to
support different performance levels of the processor. The one or more further
circuits generate current operation signals indicative of their current operation.
Examples of further circuits are a clock generator 4 which generates a current
operation signal indicative of a currently generated clock signal or possibly currently
10 available clock signals. A voltage controller 6 may be a further circuit which serves
to provide a power signal to the system and which generates a current operation signal
indicative of the current maximum voltage level which the voltage controller is able to
supply.

15 [Figure 4]

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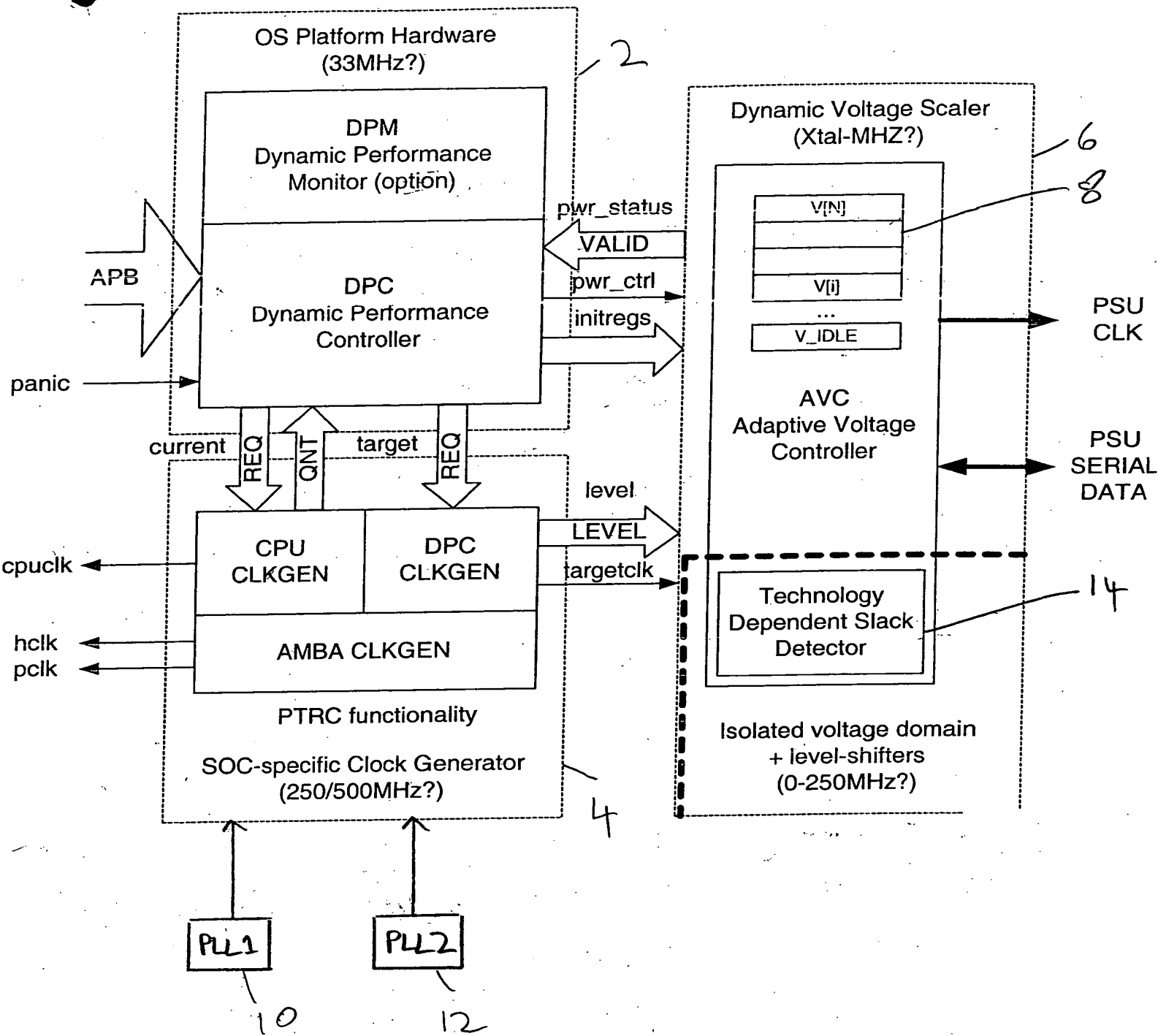


Fig. 1

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OS
Thread

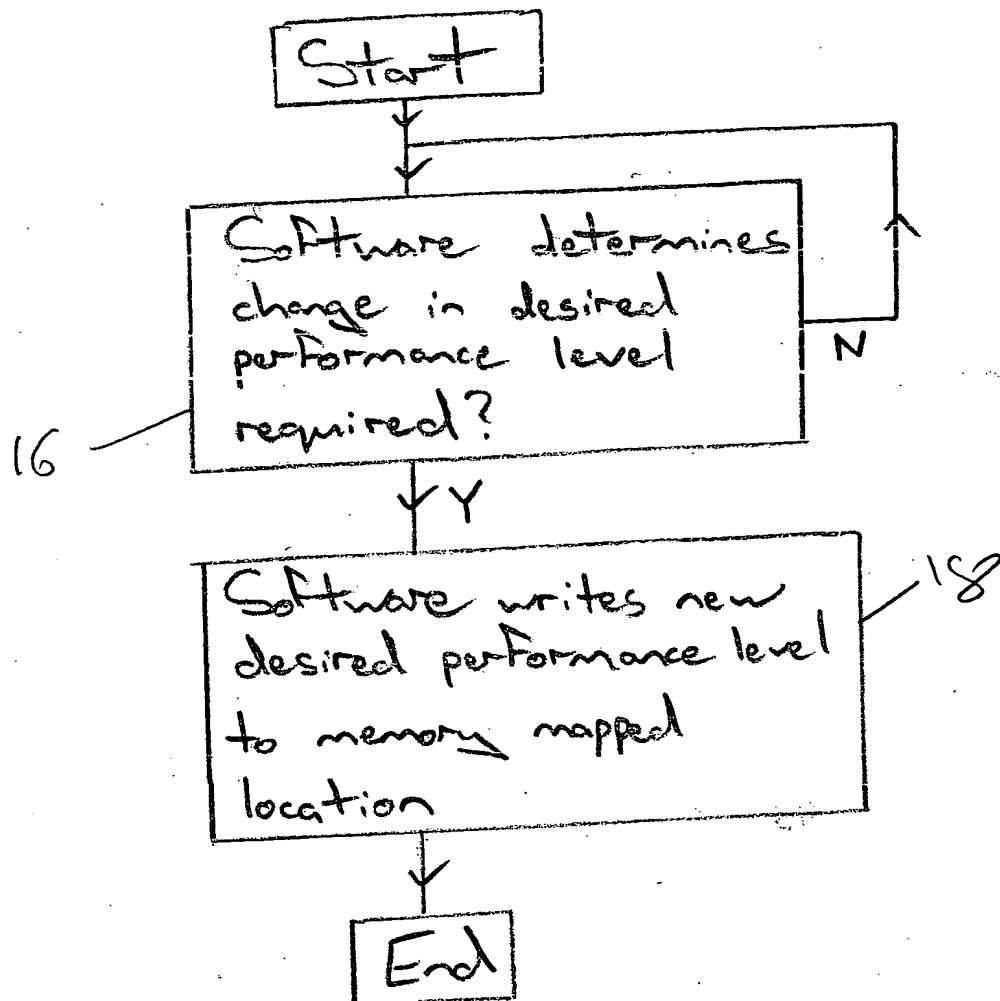


Fig. 2

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Desired Performance
6-bit

Control Signal
Value

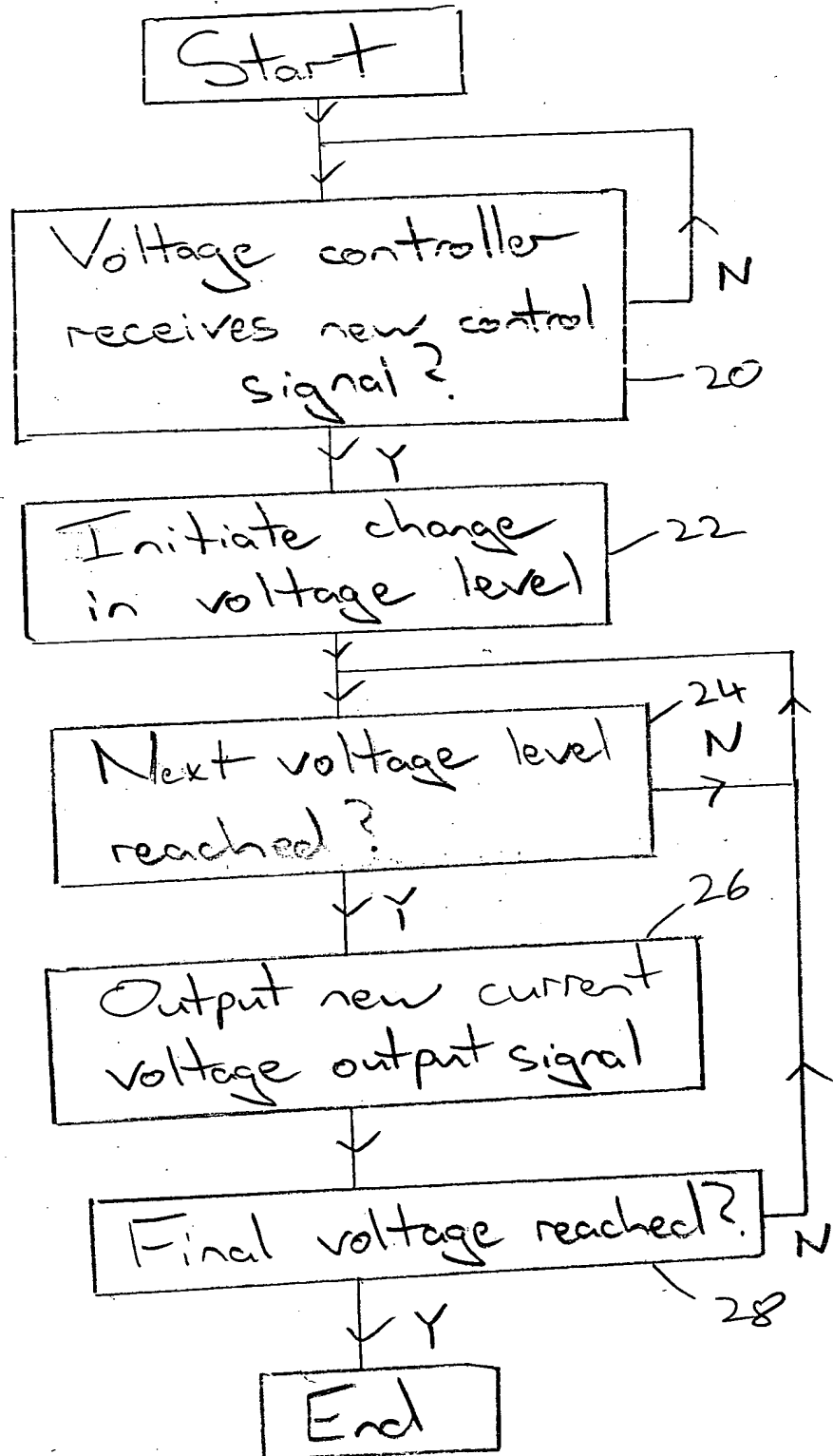
0	00000000 Idle
1 - 4	00000001
5 - 8	00000011
9 - 12	00000111
13 - 16	00001111
17 - 20	00011111
21 - 24	00111111
25 - 28	01111111
29 - 32	11111111

Example Mapping

Fig. 3

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Voltage Controller

Fig. 4

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517

Start

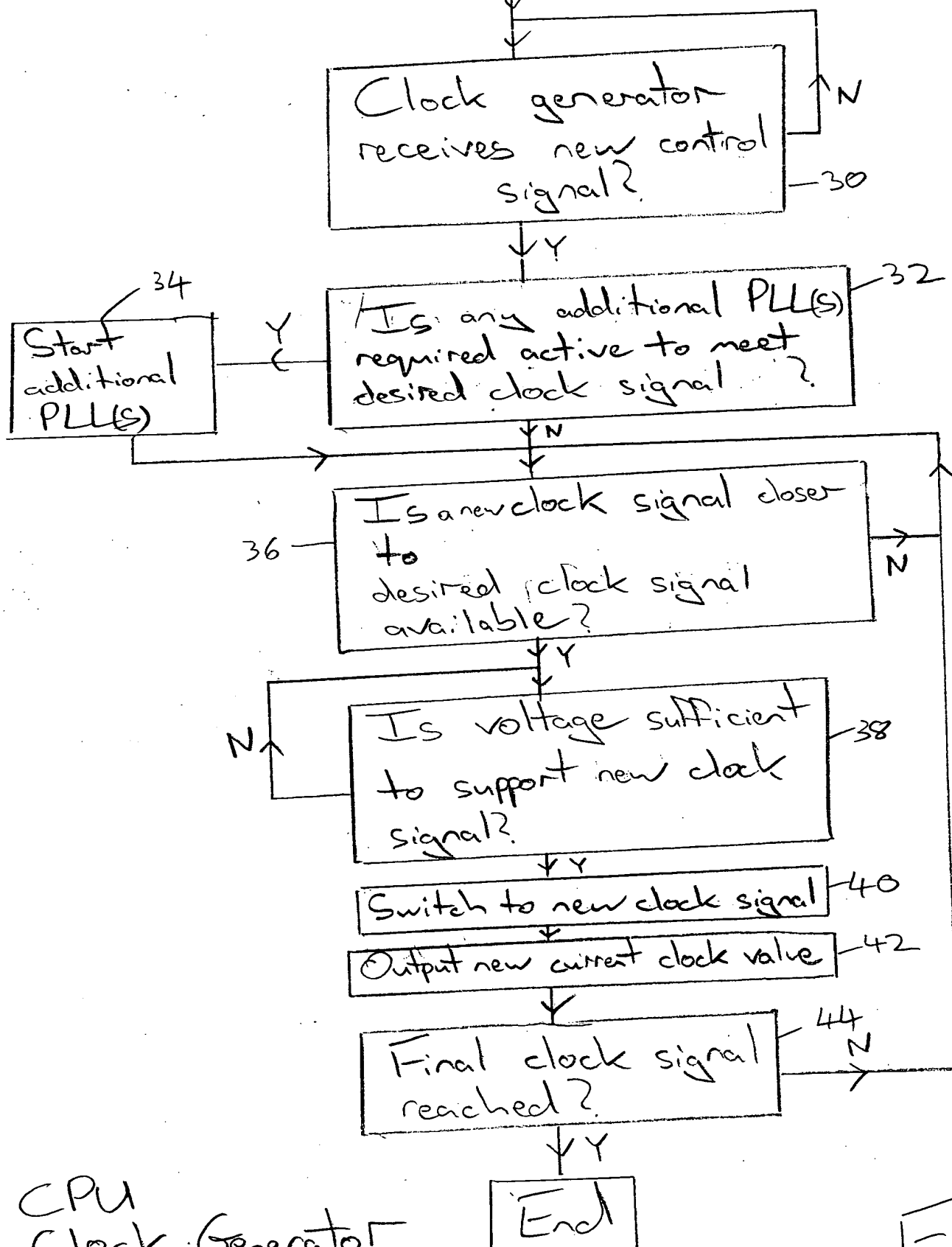
CPU
Clock Generator

Fig 5

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617

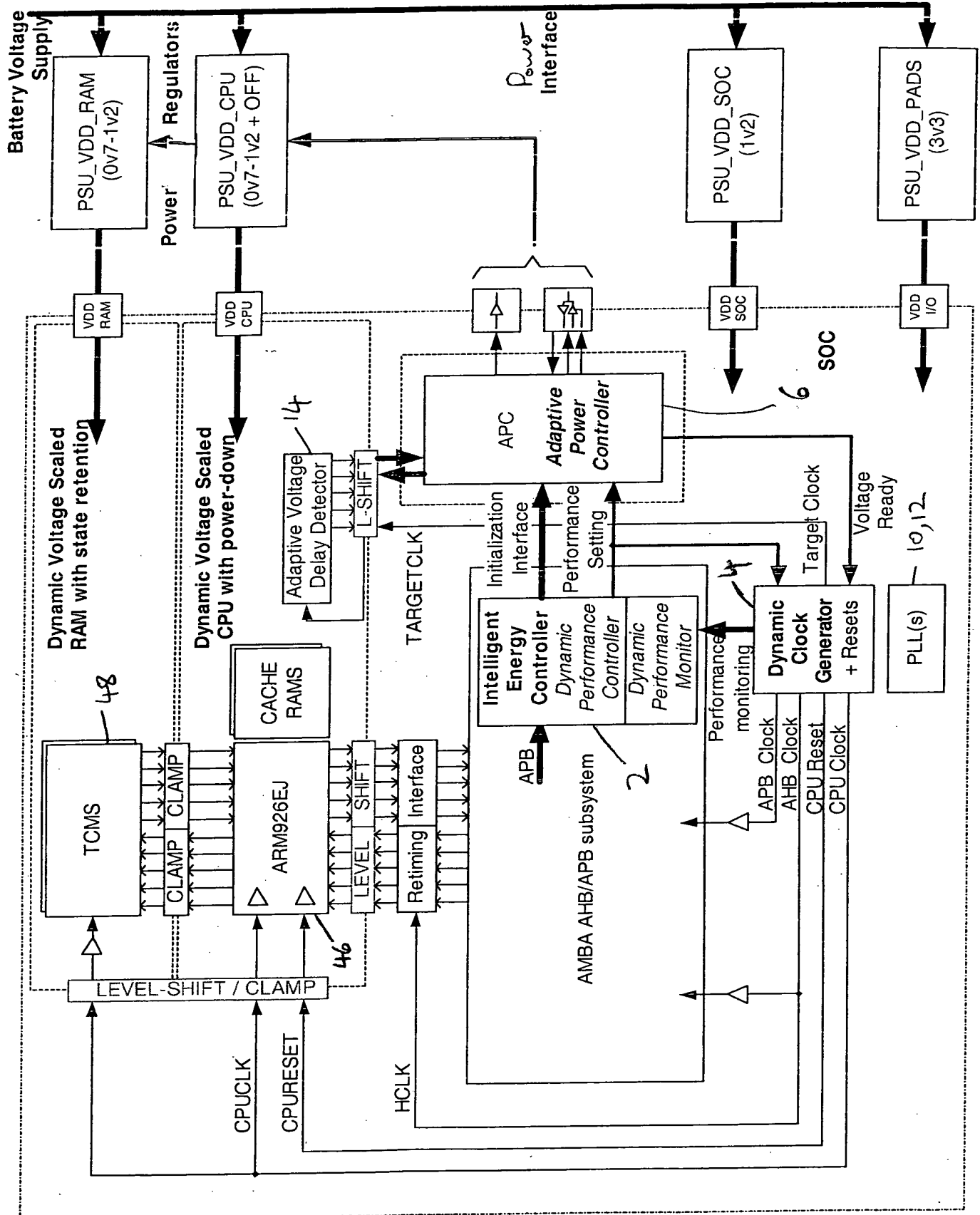


Fig. 6

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[illegible]

Figure 7.

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